Tiger Mothering and Hmong American Parent–Adolescent Relationships

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Abstract:

This study examined associations between indicators of the parent–adolescent relationship (academic support, monitoring, normative conflicts, and culture-based conflicts) and outcomes related to academic motivation and psychological well-being. Findings suggested that parental academic support was associated with higher self-esteem and academic motivation and monitoring was associated with higher self-esteem in a sample of 93 middle-school Hmong American students. Whereas normative conflicts reported by adolescents (fighting over hairstyles or clothes) were unrelated to any outcomes, reports of culture-based conflicts were associated with greater self-deprecating thoughts for all adolescents and with greater depressive symptoms among boys only. In addition, findings suggested that monitoring moderated associations between culture-based conflicts and psychological well-being. Hmong American parents who engage in “Asian” parenting practices may promote positive developmental outcomes for both boys and girls when they engage in behaviors perceived to be supportive and as moderately controlling (i.e., monitoring). Parent–adolescent interactions that lead to culture-based conflicts, however, may be harmful to the well-being of Hmong American boys and in cases in which parents do not promote connection via monitoring behaviors.

Keywords: Asian parenting | Hmong Americans | acculturation gaps | cultural dissonance | parent–adolescent relationships | Adolescent Development | Family Conflict | Mothers

Article:

Amy Chua's (2011) book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* paints a portrait of “Chinese” parenting that promotes heavy parental control of children including the use of coercive tactics and shaming as a mean to promote success. Chua conjectures that such an approach to parenting exists across cultural and ethnic groups but is more common among parents from more collectivistic cultural orientations that, in particular, are less concerned with promoting autonomy development, self-esteem, or indulging children. In families with such cultural orientations, an overall parent–adolescent relationship resulting from “traditional Asian

parenting” (high control, use of coercion, less emphasis on warmth) is not expected to harm self-esteem or lead to behavioral problems but, rather, to promote desirable outcomes such as academic success and lower conflict and filial piety. Although in conflict with many findings from the general parent–adolescent literature, Chua's observations are consistent with research suggesting that Asian parents (typically of Chinese descent) more strongly endorse parenting that is restrictive, lacking overt warmth and affection, and as more concerned with promoting respect for elders than self-esteem or autonomy in children (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Supple, Ghazarian, Peterson, & Bush, 2009). Moreover, during the late 1990s and into the 2000s, researchers described “Asian” or sometimes “Chinese” parenting in terms consistent with Chua's book and also found that highly controlling parenting with less emphasis on autonomy and warmth had no adverse influence on children and adolescents of Asian descent (Chao, 1994, 2001).

Despite research suggesting that Asian parenting or *tiger mothering* has different associations with developmental outcomes for Asian American adolescents, there are several gaps that exist in the literature. First, the majority of studies have included samples of Chinese-descent parents and adolescents from the western regions of North America. Because Asian Americans constitute a broad panethnic group with great variation across nationalities, socioeconomic and generational statuses, sending and receiving conditions (for immigrants and refugees), regional/residential variation in the United States, and familiarity with U.S. customs and norms, research is needed on diverse groups of Asian Americans. Second, a growing body of research suggests that harmful aspects (relative to family cohesion and child mental health) of the parent–adolescent relationship result when culture-based conflicts result from parenting practices (Juang, Syed, Cookston, Wang, & Kim, 2012). Although researchers have begun to examine both culture-based and normative conflicts in studies of parent–adolescent relationships in Asian American families, the circumstances under which conflicts are adversely related to outcomes are largely unexplored. Third, gender variation in associations between parent–adolescent relationships and developmental outcomes should be considered given that some cultural groups (e.g., the Hmong) have very strong patterns of gendered socialization. Finally, studies have rarely considered whether putatively positive elements of Asian parenting (indirect support, behavioral control) interact with the more negative aspects of Asian parenting (conflict) to differentially relate to outcomes. As such, a more nuanced consideration of Asian parenting is lacking in that the extent to which conflicts are adversely related to outcomes in contexts of low connection and perceived support has not been considered.

To address these gaps in the literature, the current study examined how parental academic support (indirect support), monitoring (behavioral control), and conflicts (both normative and culture-based) are associated with academic motivation and psychological well-being. In addition, gender was considered as a moderator variable so that associations between aspects of the parent–adolescent relationship and outcomes could be considered across boys and girls. Finally, to address how negative aspects of the parent–adolescent relationship (conflict) may be

offset by behaviors that are more positive in nature (support, control) for Hmong American adolescents, we also considered Conflict × Parenting interactions.

Hmong American Parent–Adolescent Relationships

The Hmong are a cultural group who came to the United States primarily as refugees fleeing Southeast Asia during the 3 decades following the military conflict in Vietnam. Culturally, the Hmong were a highly self-sufficient and agrarian group living primarily in the highland regions of Laos (but also China, Vietnam, and Thailand). Because of their social and economic isolation and due to coming as refugees either directly from traumatic experiences or after years in refugee camps, Hmong refugee parents in the United States frequently had limited education, English-language ability, and familiarity with U.S. cultural norms and laws. In addition, given their traditional religious and medical beliefs (Shamanism, animism, healing practices focused on spirits), like many Southeast Asian refugee groups, Hmong Americans experienced hardships related to acculturative stress (learning a new language, adjusting to new customs and laws) and living in low-income areas. Early scholarly work on Hmong Americans painted a bleak picture of cultural conflicts, high frequency of mental health problems, and high intergenerational conflict (Chan, 1994; Hsu, Davies, & Hansen, 2004; Lao Human Rights Council, 2001;Lo, 2001; Lor & Chu, 2002). Census estimates suggest that there are roughly 260,000 Hmong Americans residing in the United States, with the largest populations residing in California, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Carolina (Hmong National Development, 2010). Although there is only a limited body of research on Hmong American parent–adolescent relationships, the bulk of the literature tends to point to three main themes: (a) significant concern regarding cultural dissonance between parents and adolescents, (b) Hmong American parents as relatively high in control but low in overt signs of love, and (c) gender-based differential socialization of children.

The first major theme related to Hmong American parent–adolescent relationships concerns intergenerational *cultural dissonance*. Alternatively described as acculturation gaps, cultural dissonance, or dissonant acculturation, intergenerational conflicts that are culture-based have been the primary focus in the literature on Hmong American families. As is the case with other immigrants or refugee groups, cultural dissonance is expected to result when parents and adolescents develop divergent views about appropriate levels of autonomy, how children should spend free time, or the appropriateness of specific disciplinary techniques (Bahrassa, Juan, & Lee, 2012; Juang, Syed, & Takagi, 2007; Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000; Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008; Yang, 2003). These divergent viewpoints are common in cases in which adolescents more rapidly acculturate toward individualistic values because of relatively high exposure to American "majority culture" in their interactions with teachers and peers at school or with media at home. Hmong American parents, on the other hand, are often highly motivated to retain cultural patterns that emphasize respect for elders, spending time with family, and fear their children becoming "Americanized." Studies have suggested that Hmong American adolescents view the

difficult balance of trying to assimilate toward expectations with peers and at school with different expectations and values present in the family or home as the primary source of acculturative stress (Supple, McCoy, & Wang, 2010; Xiong, Eliason, Detzner, & Cleveland, 2005).

Moreover, a major concern in the Hmong community is that Hmong American youth are failing to retain cultural values and that resulting lack of familiarity with parental cultural values and their subsequent family conflicts are the root cause of developmental problems (e.g., deviance, school failure, psychological distress; Lee, Jung, Su, Tran, & Bahrassa, 2009; Yang, 2003).

A key factor that has yet to be considered, however, in studies of Hmong American adolescents is a distinction between "normative" conflicts that most adolescents have with parents (e.g., regarding clothes, hairstyle, or dating) and *culture-based conflicts* that are particularly salient for Asian Americans (Juang et al., 2012). It is possible that normative conflicts, although unpleasant, do not necessarily adversely influence family dynamics or adolescent outcomes. Culture-based conflicts, however, may be much more damaging both to perceptions of family harmony (Juang et al., 2012) and adolescent well-being because those conflicts often involve intractable disagreements and also a critique of who the adolescent is becoming.

The second key theme in the literature are findings that Hmong American parents (relative to "mainstream" American parents) tend to be more controlling and restrictive, more focused on respect for elders and familial obligations than promoting autonomy, and less overtly warm and affectionate (Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Supple, McCoy, & Wang, 2010;Supple & Small, 2006). Given their concerns regarding the "Americanization" of their children, Hmong American parents may react with greater restrictiveness, which in turn may intensify intergenerational conflicts (Bahrassa et al., 2012; Supple & Small, 2006; Xiong, Rettig, & Tuicomepee, 2008; Yang, 2003). In reference to low levels of affection and warmth, some data suggest that Hmong American youth feel loved by parents despite these characterizations because they recognize that many parenting strategies are intended to convey love indirectly. Consequently, parental expressions of love may be more passive and involve instrumental support such as helping with homework, attending school events, or by simply saying "just know we love you." Additional expressions of love include parental sacrifice, "being there," attempting to support schoolwork, and placing restrictions on adolescents' activities and social interactions (Chao & Kaeochinda, 2010; Lamborn & Moua, 2008; Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Supple et al., 2010; Xiong et al., 2005).

The final theme in the literature on Hmong American parent–adolescent relationships centers on gendered socialization. A limited body of research suggests that Hmong American parents are particularly restrictive of girls who often are expected to spend greater time at home assisting with family needs (cooking, cleaning), whereas boys are allowed greater freedom to date, socialize outside of the home, and express opinions (Bahrassa et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2009; Supple et al., 2010). Although such gender differences in parenting are assumed, empirical

studies have suggested no gender differences in reports of conflict with parents between Hmong American girls versus boys (Bahrassa et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2009). Moreover, there is only mixed evidence (with samples of college students) suggesting that gender may moderate associations between family conflict and substance use (associated with more alcohol use among Hmong American female college students, but less smoking for boys; Lee et al., 2009) but not between culture-based conflicts and psychological distress (Bahrassa et al., 2012).

In sum, Hmong American parents are typically characterized as highly emphasizing respect for elders and interdependence, as highly controlling and restrictive of free-time activities, as low in promoting or being supportive of autonomy (particularly so for girls), and as conveying their love less through warmth and affection and more through indirect support such as encouraging achievement, working hard, "being there," and listening to their children. In addition, Hmong American parents also may engage in shaming practices such as making children feel guilty and using social comparisons with other children as a means of shaming their children into better behaviors (e.g., "Look at Mae, she is so polite to her grandparents, her parents must be so proud") or threaten children with unrealistically harsh punishments (e.g., "If you don't get better grades, you will have to leave the house"; Lor & Chu, 2002; Supple et al., 2010; Xiong, 2000). Given the depictions of Hmong American parenting in the literature, it seems reasonable to conclude that many Hmong American parents engage in practices similar to those described as either traditionally Asian (*guan* or "training" with an emphasis on achievement and respect and not warmth and love; Chao, 2001) or as consistent with being a tiger mom.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study proposes that aspects of the parent–adolescent relationship are the key *proximal processes* associated with adolescent well-being and academic motivation. According to Bronfenbrenner (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009), proximal processes are ongoing and frequent interactions that occur with people, social settings, and cultural symbols (values, beliefs, orientations) and that provide the "engine that drives" development. Although socialization of young people takes place across ecological levels that vary from broader societal and cultural factors (i.e., the macrosystem) to smaller social units such as families, schools, and peer groups, it is these latter social units (i.e., microsystems) in which the continuous processes are maximally influential in shaping development (Tudge et al., 2009). Based on previous research on Hmong American parent–adolescent relationships, four indicators were selected to represent key processes that may be related to outcomes in adolescents: (a) academic support, (b) parental monitoring, (c) normative conflicts, and (d) culture-based conflict.

Another key element to Bronfenbrenner's theory is that the ultimate impact of proximal processes varies across individual characteristics and also larger cultural contexts within which the interactions take place. Macrosystem characteristics such as cultural beliefs, values, and

attitudes likely influence how proximal processes shape development and proximal processes within microsystems. As such, cultural beliefs alter or shape how similar parenting behaviors (high levels of control) associate differently with outcomes such as academic achievement or self-esteem. The expectation resulting from this proposition was that for Hmong American adolescents, their motivation to achieve in school and their psychological well-being would be associated with elements of the parent–adolescent relationship that convey love and concern through culturally expected ways (academic support and behavioral control). On the other hand, conflicts with parents were expected to be associated with lowered psychological well-being as most scholarship on Hmong American parent–adolescent relations tends to suggest that cultural dissonance is a key "cause" of problematic outcomes for adolescents. In sum, the proposed conceptual model suggests that academic support and monitoring by parents would be associated positively with adolescent well-being. Conflicts, on the other hand, were expected to be related negatively to well-being; however, the exact nature of these associations was only tentatively proposed. That is, one key aspect of this study was to differentiate normative conflicts from culture-based conflict to ascertain whether one or both of these elements of the parent–adolescent relationship are associated with well-being.

Gender is also a key factor that shapes how proximal processes impact development. Girls, compared with boys, are more strongly controlled, are required to be at home more often, spend more time helping parents by translating/interpreting and performing stereotypically female tasks in the home (cooking, cleaning, childcare), and generally report greater dissatisfaction with relationships with parents (Lee et al., 2009; Supple et al., 2010). It remains unclear, however, whether or not parent–adolescent processes may vary in associations with development across males and females. Previous research has suggested that culture-based conflicts have similar associations with psychological well-being across Hmong American college-age youth (Bahrassa et al., 2012). On the other hand, conflicts were found to be associated with greater alcohol use by Hmong American college females (Lee et al., 2009) and greater academic success for males. As such, there is some evidence to suggest that culture-based conflicts may more adversely influence females than males.

Finally, this study also proposed that associations between conflict and adolescent outcomes should vary as a function of more positive aspects of the parent–adolescent relationship. Previous studies have suggested that culture-based conflicts in Asian American families adversely influence adolescents possibly due to adversely affecting family cohesion (Juang et al., 2012). As such, an important possibility to consider is whether culture-based conflicts have lowered negative associations in relational contexts that manage to remain more positive. That is, the expectation in this study was that the association between culture-based conflicts and adolescent outcomes would vary as a function of academic support and parental monitoring.

Method

Participants

Participants included 93 Hmong American middle-school students selected from one county school district in North Carolina. All students self-reported their ethnicity as Hmong and 97% of respondents were born in the United States. The remaining three students were born in Laos or Thailand and moved to the United States as infants. The majority (86%) lived with two biological parents, with 92% of mothers and 98% of fathers reported as born in Southeast Asia (with the vast majority being born in Laos). Although 86% of respondents indicated that they feel as if their families' income was “about average” or above, 73% indicated that they qualify for free or reduced lunch programs at school. All adolescents indicated that they spoke English; however, 29% reported that they mostly spoke Hmong at home, 47% that they spoke both English and Hmong at home, and 24% that they mostly spoke English at home. The average age of the sample was 13 years (*SD* = 1.28), and 59% of participants were boys.

Procedure

Parental consent forms (in Hmong and in English) were distributed to students by their middle-school homeroom teacher. Students who returned signed consent forms were provided with a questionnaire to complete in their middle-school homeroom class. All participants who returned a consent form and a questionnaire were given a gift card to a fast food restaurant. A total of 95 questionnaires were returned (of 185 possible) for a response rate of roughly 50%. All questionnaires were completed in English. Two respondents were dropped from the final sample because of significant missing data across survey items, resulting in a sample of 93.

Measures

Culture-based conflicts

Adolescents' reports of culture-based conflicts were assessed using the 10-item Asian American Family Conflicts Scale (Lee et al., 2000). This measure assesses, from the perspective of the adolescent, how frequently the adolescent feels conflicts with the parents that are culture-based. Sample items from this scale include “I want to state my own opinion, but my parents considerate it to be disrespectful to talk back.” The 5-point response format ranged from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*), and the Cronbach's alpha for this sample was .82. Items were averaged to create an overall score on this measure.

Normative conflicts

Normative conflicts with parents were assessed with nine items assessing frequency of conflicts (from 1 = *almost never* to 5 = *almost always*) regarding everyday issues such as schoolwork, media choices, and household chores or work (e.g., “How frequently do you argue with your parents about schoolwork?”). Items were averaged to create a summary variable, and the Cronbach's alpha for these items was .85.

Parental academic support

Adolescents were asked to report on each of their mother's and father's level of support related to schoolwork (“This parent makes me feel good when I study or get good grades”; “This parents attends school-sponsored activities”) using a seven-item scale (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). The 4-point Likert response format ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*), and items were reverse coded so that higher scores were indicative of greater perceived academic support (αs = .73 and .76 for reports of mothers and fathers, respectively). Because the summary scales (after averaging across items) were highly correlated (r = .56), reports of fathers and mothers were averaged to create an overall measure of parental academic support.

Parental monitoring

Parental knowledge of adolescent free-time activities (monitoring) was assessed using a six-item measure (Peterson, 1985). Sample items included “This parent knows who my friends are” and “This parent knows where I am after school.” Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*), and items were reverse coded so that higher scores were indicative of greater perceived monitoring by parents. Cronbach's alphas in this sample were .72 for reports of mothers and .74 for reports of fathers. Items were averaged to create an overall monitoring score for reports on both mothers and fathers, but these summary scores were highly correlated (r = .70), so the two measures were averaged to create an overall measure of parental monitoring.

Depressive symptoms

Depressive symptoms were assessed using the 20-item Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression scale for children (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). Depressive symptoms were measured in reference to symptoms an individual may have experienced over the course of the past month (response options range from 0 = *never* to 3 = *almost every day*). Items were averaged to create an overall score for depressive symptoms, and the Cronbach's alpha was .84 for this sample.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1989). Although the RSES includes 10 items (with response options ranging from 1 =*strongly agree* to 4 = *strongly disagree*), recent studies suggest that method effects associated with the negatively worded items bias overall self-esteem scores. Moreover, studies also suggest that the RSES may assess two distinct (although related) subdimensions, one that is the typical conceptualization of self-esteem (positive feelings toward the self) and another element of negative self-esteem or self-deprecation that is more similar to depressive symptoms (for a review, see Supple, Su, Plunkett, Peterson, & Bush, in press). As such, in this study, summary scores were created by averaging across the five positively worded RSES items to assess self-esteem (α = .73) and

across the five negatively worded items to assess self-deprecation ($\alpha = .75$) after all items were reverse scored so that higher scores would indicate greater self-esteem and self-deprecation.

Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for all study variables are presented in Table 1. An examination of these associations suggests that girls, compared with boys, reported greater depressive symptoms, monitoring by parents, and academic motivation. Consistent with previous studies, Hmong American boys and girls in this study reported comparable levels of conflict (both normative and culture-based) with parents. Correlations also suggest that academic support and parental monitoring are associated positively with self-esteem and academic motivation, but are unrelated to self-deprecation and depressive symptoms. Culture-based conflicts, on the other hand, are associated positively with self-deprecation and depressive symptoms, but are unrelated to self-esteem and academic motivation. Normative conflicts are only associated with higher self-deprecation. Also of note, the association between normative and culture-based conflicts was positive and moderately strong, suggesting that adolescents who report greater frequency of culture-based conflicts also tend to report greater normative conflicts with parents.

[Table 1 Omitted]

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables (N = 93)

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to evaluate the main research questions. A model was estimated with each of the four outcome variables regressed onto adolescent gender, perceived family economic standing, free/reduced lunch at school, and the four measures of the parent–adolescent relationship. Variables representing family socioeconomics were included as control variables; however, because these variables were unrelated to any other variables in the study, their coefficients are omitted from the tables and results and discussion. In a subsequent model, Gender × Parent–Adolescent Relationship product terms were included. Product terms were created by multiplying gender by each parent–adolescent relationship variable and then each of these product terms was regressed on gender and the relevant parent–adolescent variable. The residuals from that analysis were used as product terms so that product terms and their constituent variables had zero associations (Kline, 2011). A similar approach was used to create Monitoring × Culture-Based Conflict and Academic Support × Culture-Based Conflict product terms for a total of six interactions examined.

The results are presented in Table 2 by each dependent variable and with nonsignificant coefficients for product terms omitted. In reference to depressive symptoms, only gender was significantly associated, which suggested that girls, on average, reported greater depressive symptoms than boys. The gender difference remained after parent–adolescent variables were included in the model. A significant Gender × Culture-Based Conflict product term, however,

suggested that the association between this aspect of the parent–adolescent relationship and depressive symptoms varied for boys and girls. An examination of simple slopes suggested that there was a statistically significant and positive association for boys ($B = .14$, $p = .03$) between culture-based conflicts and depressive symptoms; however, among girls, there was no association ($B = -.11$, $p = .43$). The nature of this interaction is demonstrated in Figure 1.

[Table 2 Omitted]

[Figure 1 Omitted]

In addition, there was a significant Monitoring × Culture-Based Conflict product term. This negative association ($B = -.34$, $p = .005$) suggests that, at higher levels of parental monitoring, the positive association between culture-based conflicts and depressive symptoms becomes less positive. The nature of this interaction is presented in Figure 2. In addition, simple slopes suggested that the association between culture-based conflicts and depressive symptoms was nonsignificant at high ($B = -.24$, $p = .11$; 1 standard deviation above the mean) and medium levels of parental monitoring ($B = .10$, $p = .27$; at the mean) but positively associated at low levels of parental monitoring ($B = .44$, $p = .001$; 1 standard deviation below the mean). Such findings suggest that culture-based conflicts are more strongly associated with depressive symptoms in instances in which adolescents experience lower parental monitoring. Put another way, parental monitoring may offset the association between culture-based conflicts and depressive symptoms.

[Figure 2 Omitted]

In reference to self-deprecating thoughts, the only significant association was observed between culture-based conflicts and increased self-deprecation. There were no significant interactions. With self-esteem as the outcome, however, both parental academic support and parental monitoring were related positively. There was a significant Monitoring × Culture-Based Conflict interaction ($B = .26$, $p = .01$), suggesting that at higher levels of parental monitoring, the negative association between culture-based conflict and self-esteem becomes more positive. Figure 3 displays this interaction, and simple slopes suggested that at high levels of parental monitoring, there was a positive association between culture-based conflicts and self-esteem ($B = .25$, $p = .02$), whereas at low levels of parental monitoring, there was a negative association between culture-based conflicts and self-esteem ($B = -.28$, $p = .03$). The association between culture-based conflicts and self-esteem was nonsignificant, on the other hand, at medium levels of monitoring ($B = -.01$, $p = .83$). This interaction suggests that culture-based conflicts are most strongly and adversely related to self-esteem at lower levels of parental monitoring.

[Figure 3 Omitted]

With academic motivation as the outcome variable, findings suggest that gender (girls were higher on average) and academic support were significantly associated. These findings suggest that girls and those adolescents reporting greater academic support by parents indicated greater academic motivation. There were no significant interactions, however, with academic motivation as the outcome.

Discussion

Results suggested that elements of the Hmong American parent–adolescent relationship that convey support and connection were associated with higher motivation to achieve in school and higher self-esteem. Culture-based conflicts (but not normative conflicts), on the other hand, seemed to have an adverse association with well-being in terms of greater depressive symptoms for boys and self-deprecation for both boys and girls.

In reference to the debate regarding the effectiveness of tiger mothering or Asian parenting for Hmong American adolescents, these findings suggest that different elements of parenting relate to adolescent outcomes in different ways. When it comes to putting in effort at school and a positive sense of self, experiencing parents who are supportive (through their efforts to support academic success) and who possess knowledge of the child's activities and whereabouts are positive factors. As such, Asian American parents who can convey support and concern, even indirectly by attending school events, asking where children are going after school, or knowing about their child's activities solely by “being there” may have a positive influence on their children. These same factors, however, seem unrelated to early adolescents' internalized negative feelings. Culture-based conflicts, on the other hand, were associated with increased self-deprecating thoughts for both boys and girls and with depressive symptoms for boys. Such findings are consistent with other studies of Asian Americans suggesting that conflict with parents may be associated with increased psychological distress and that culture-based conflicts are particularly problematic for Hmong Americans (Bahrassa et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2009). On the other hand, these results are inconsistent compared with those of Juang et al. (2012), who found that normative conflicts were directly associated with lowered psychological well-being, but that culture-based conflicts were mediated by parent–adolescent relationship factors using samples of Chinese Americans.

These findings highlight a nuanced understanding of how elements of being a tiger mother should be viewed as benign or unrelated to outcomes for Hmong American adolescents. When adolescents perceive that their desire to have an opinion or interest in having non-Hmong friends is met with accusations that the child is not “behaving Hmong” there may be adverse psychological consequences, particularly for boys. These findings and those of other recent studies (Bahrassa et al., 2012; Juang et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2009) suggest that elements of Asian parenting may be associated with conflicts that are associated with feelings of cultural dissonance, which may, in turn, be associated with more negative parent–adolescent

relationships and lowered adolescent psychological well-being. The first implication of these findings is that when it comes to evaluating the desirability of a tiger mother approach to parenting, understanding correlates of child outcomes depends on the aspect of the parent–adolescent relationship and the outcome. Some aspects of Asian parenting or tiger mothering may be unrelated, but others are negatively associated in ways that are not overtly obvious. That is, children of tiger mothers may well have high self-esteem and do well in school; however, less obvious outward signs related to the development of self-deprecating thoughts may be more common among adolescents who feel a sense of rejection based on the parents' disapproval of who the child “is becoming” (i.e., an American).

Previous research has suggested that, compared with boys, girls experience much greater restrictiveness from parents and are expected to spend more time at home alongside parents assisting with family responsibilities (Bahrassa et al., 2012). Although greater restrictiveness by parents was reported by girls in this sample (see Table 1), boys and girls did not vary in their reports of either normative or culture-based conflicts, which also is consistent with previous studies of Hmong American college students (Bahrassa et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2009). Perhaps because Hmong American boys are granted more freedom and autonomy, when their actions or behaviors are met with derision from parents (a boy who wants to spend more time with peers is told he is not respectful), there is a perceived role violation. Consequently, culture-based conflicts in early adolescence might be more detrimental to Hmong American boys in terms of their depressive symptoms. On the other hand, culture-based conflicts were associated in a similar manner across gender to greater self-deprecating thoughts. In reference to debates regarding Asian parenting and tiger mothers, there is some evidence (although limited) to suggest that boys may react differently to such parenting compared with girls.

In addition, associations between culture-based conflicts and depressive symptoms and self-esteem were moderated by perceptions of parental monitoring. In both cases, greater reports of parental knowledge of free-time activities and surveillance efforts by parents tended to offset possibly adverse influences of culture-based conflicts and these outcomes. The measure of parental monitoring used in this study (often deemed to actually assess knowledge or even child disclosure; Stattin & Kerr, 2000) may assess perceptions of parental concern, relatedness, or “being there” for Hmong American early adolescents. In such a context, culture-based conflicts may be interpreted differently and be less likely to adversely influence self-esteem or depression. Moreover, recent studies with Chinese Americans have suggested that culture-based conflicts may erode family cohesion (which in turn negatively impacts mental health; Juang et al., 2012). As such, an implication for tiger mothering is that if parents engage in behaviors that may appear coercive or that involve shaming (and are culture-based) but also show concern by knowing about and restricting their children's activities, these parenting behaviors may not adversely influence adolescents and, in some cases, may even enhance self-esteem. Put another way, when parents convey cultural disapproval in the context of less relatedness (Juang et al., 2012), that

disapproval and culture-based conflict may be particularly damaging to the development of internalized negative thoughts about the self.

Limitations associated with this study include reliance on only adolescent-report data from a relatively small sample surveyed at one time point. Associations between study constructs are not possible to differentiate in terms of causes versus effects. For example, this study suggests that the perception of cultural conflicts may be associated with greater depressive symptoms among boys, but it is also plausible that boys who suffer depressive symptoms may negatively view their relationship with parents. In addition, the reliance on adolescent reports only is not the ideal manner in which to study acculturation gaps according to some researchers (Birman, 2006), and our findings are limited in that, rather than pointing to actual gaps between parents and adolescents, we only assessed adolescents' perceptions of culture-based conflicts. Researchers are beginning to observe, however, that actual conflicts or gaps are not as relevant for Asian Americans as are feelings associated with those gaps. For example, it may be internalized conflicts that an adolescent experiences due to conflicts with parents that are perceived to be cultural (Bahrassa et al., 2012) that are responsible for disrupted family relations and adverse outcomes for adolescents (Fuligni, 2012). Future studies regarding culture-based conflicts and their contribution to adolescent well-being should include longitudinal data to assist in determining whether there are particular points in adolescence when such conflicts are highest and also more or less detrimental to psychological well-being. Larger and more culturally diverse samples are also needed to further explore gender differences in parent–adolescent relationships and in associations between these factors and adolescent outcomes.

In addition, this study examined a limited number of constructs related to the parent–adolescent relationship, some of which may not map exactly onto factors related to tiger mothers. For example, the measure included in this study to assess monitoring or behavioral control may be similar to restrictiveness, but likely does not capture the strong nature of restrictiveness some Hmong American adolescents may experience (e.g., not being allowed to participate in extracurricular activities). Moreover, the measure of monitoring may be more accurately described as an assessment of parental knowledge (Stattin & Kerr, 2000), with that knowledge resulting from child disclosure or, in the case of Hmong Americans, requiring children to be at home and with the family (i.e., not monitoring activities away from home). Findings that varied from those reported in Juang and colleagues' (2012) study of Chinese Americans may have been due to different measures selected for each study as well. Future studies should continue to examine how normative and culture-based conflicts impact family factors including indicators of relatedness and familism, and how those processes are associated with adolescent outcomes both in mediational (family factors are responsible or transmit “effects” of culture-based conflict) and moderation models (culture-based conflicts are not as negatively related in contexts of high relatedness) for Asian American adolescents.

Despite these limitations, the current study adds to the literature on Asian parenting or tiger mothers by suggesting that parent–adolescent relationships that include elements of

restrictiveness (knowing where adolescents are) and indirect support may be associated with greater self-esteem and academic outcomes. Aspects of the parent–adolescent relationship that result in conflict, but only culture-based conflicts, may be adversely related to internalized negative feelings directed toward the self. In sum, Hmong American tiger mothers may express care and concern in culturally appropriate ways (indirect support and monitoring rather than warmth and affection) to enhance their children's achievement and self-esteem. If parents convey disapproval that children are not “Hmong enough,” their early adolescents may begin to develop negative feelings about themselves resulting from internalized conflicts regarding their relations with parents and what it means to be Hmong American. Particularly when those conflicts occur in conjunction with less connection to parents, they may be particularly detrimental.

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